

# **IMPLEMENTATION TEAM MEETING NOTES**

**April 30, 2003, 9:00 a.m.-4 p.m.**

**CHELAN COUNTY PUD OFFICES  
WENATCHEE, WASHINGTON**

## ***I. Greetings, Introductions and Review of the Agenda.***

The April 30, 2003 meeting of the Implementation Team, held at the Chelan County PUD offices in Wenatchee, Washington, was chaired by Jim Ruff of NMFS and facilitated by John Palensky. The meeting agenda and a list of attendees are attached as Enclosures A and B.

The following is a distillation (not a verbatim transcript) of items discussed at the meeting, together with actions taken on those items. Please note that some enclosures referenced in the body of the text may be too lengthy to attach; all enclosures referenced are available upon request from NMFS's Kathy Ceballos at 503/230-5420 or via email at [kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov](mailto:kathy.ceballos@noaa.gov).

Palensky welcomed everyone to the meeting, led a round of introductions and a review of the agenda. Palensky, who asked that any comments on the April meeting minutes be provided to him as soon as possible.

## ***2. Updates.***

***A. In-Season Management (TMT).*** Cindy Henriksen reminded the group that, at its last meeting, the IT had discussed an issue elevated from the TMT regarding the start of spill at the Snake River collector projects; we agreed to start spill despite the fact that the water supply forecast was right on the threshold, she said. Henriksen said the April mid-month forecast declined slightly; the expected water supply forecast is still right on the cusp, but spill is continuing at the Lower Snake projects, as well as at the Lower Columbia projects. She added that the TMT has also discussed two other SORs since the last IT meeting, SORs 2003-7 and 2003-8. SOR 2003-7 requested that Grant County PUD narrow the flow fluctuation bands at Priest Rapids; Grant County declined to participate in the emergency conference call held last Thursday. They have subsequently said they will commit only to meeting the flow fluctuation bands agreed to in the Hanford Reach Fish Protection Agreement, Henriksen said.

Henriksen said the TMT held an emergency conference call this morning to discuss SOR 2003-9, regarding Dworshak operations. Dworshak has been releasing 16 Kcfs, and the project is currently about 30 feet above its April 30 flood control elevation. The SOR asked that we continue to release 16 Kcfs from Lower Granite until the 89 Kcfs flow target is achieved at Lower Granite, given declining flows in the Lower Snake, she explained. The current STP run shows we should be able to continue to release 16 Kcfs through mid-May, Henriksen said; after that, we will have to reduce Dworshak outflow to minimum, just over 3 Kcfs. The decision this morning was essentially whether we want to use all of the available Dworshak storage now, or reduce outflow somewhat, to keep some water in the bank for later in the spring. After a 90-minute discussion, the TMT agreed that the current 16 Kcfs outflow from Dworshak will be maintained until the next face-to-face TMT meeting on May 7, at which point we will re-evaluate that operation, Henriksen said.

Scott Boyd said the TMT plans to finalize the spring/summer update to the 2003 Water Management Plan at its May 7 meeting; he asked that any comments on the most recent draft of this document be submitted to him by Monday, May 5. He added that the spring flow targets are 220 Kcfs at McNary, 135 Kcfs at Priest Rapids and 89 Kcfs at Lower Granite; it does not appear that the Lower Granite target will be met this year. If the forecast stays the same, the summer seasonal flow targets will be 50 Kcfs at Lower Granite and 200 Kcfs at McNary.

***B. Independent Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB).*** No ISAB report was presented at today's meeting.

***C. Water Quality Team (WQT).*** No WQT meeting was presented at today's meeting.

***D. System Configuration Team (SCT).*** No SCT report was presented at today's meeting.

***E. TMDL Update.*** No TMDL update was presented at today's meeting.

***F. Water Quality Plan Work Group (WQPG).*** See Agenda Item 6, below.

### ***3. Overview of NWPPC's Newly-Adopted Mainstem Update.***

John Shurts distributed copies of the pre-publication draft of the Council's 2003 Mainstem Amendments, dated April 2003; this document is available via the Council website or by calling the Council directly. He noted that there is still some work to be done on the Amendments; the Council has to develop findings explaining how the final Amendments relate to the recommendations received. At that point, he said, the 2003 Mainstem Amendments will be legally final; they will likely be adopted at the June Council meeting in Boise. Shurts also discussed the relation of the 2003 Amendments to the Council's 2000 Mainstem amendments and to the 2000 Biological Opinion.

Shurts then drew the IT's attention to several key sections of the 2003 Mainstem Amendments document, including:

- Their provisions for non-listed resident and anadromous fish and wildlife
- Their provisions for the habitat and spill needs for spawning, rearing and migration of both listed and non-listed species
- Their discussion of power system adequacy, reliability and cost, including potential areas where greater cost-efficiency may be possible, such as reduced summer spill
- Water management, in particular, the operation of Grand Coulee Dam to provide more benefit to resident fish in Lake Roosevelt and summer operations at Libby and Hungry Horse

The group offered a series of clarifying questions and comments, particularly on the section of the Amendments document focused on spill and other project operations. Please refer to the relevant sections of the Mainstem Amendments document for details of Shurts' presentation.

Ruff noted that, at the National Wildlife Federation v. NMFS 200 BiOp lawsuit court hearing last week, the Montana Attorney General said the State of Montana fully supports the BiOp's operations at Libby and Hungry Horse, yet the Mainstem Amendments document seems to say something else. Shurts replied that the BiOp does recognize the possibility of research to improve the operations called for in the 2000 BiOp; this section of the Amendments document is based on that fact.

In response to a question from Palensky, Shurts said the Council has received many comments from the tribes and others expressing discomfort with the federal implementation process. In its 2000 program, the Council agreed to work with the federal action agencies to try to broaden that process. Somehow, however, that never got done, said Shurts, so on pages 25-26 of the 2003 Amendments, the Council agreed to re-engage on the issue of joint Council/action agency sponsorship of the Regional Forum process. Shurts added, however, that this may not be considered as high a priority as some of the specific actions called for in the 2003 Mainstem Amendments. He also briefed the group on the function of the Council's controversial Fish Passage Center Oversight Board.

Ruff reiterated that NOAA Fisheries welcomes Council participation in the Regional Forum process, as well as any help the Council can give in helping to broaden participation to the Regional Forum table. Does the Council feel that functioning as a co-chair of the Regional Forum groups is essential? Jim Athearn asked. There is a desire among the Council to have more of a leadership role in the Regional Forum, rather than simply being one of many participants, but how that might work needs some additional discussion, Shurts replied. Tom Iverson observed that it may be difficult for any one Council member to provide a unified Council position on many of the issues that come before the Regional Forum. Shurts replied that the primary goal of such participation would be for the Council to bring a somewhat different perspective to the Regional Forum deliberations, not to radically change the process. He added that, since 2000, the primary focus of the Council staff has been on offsite mitigation; in the future, however, it is likely that Council staff will seek to play a more active role in mainstem operations.

#### ***4. Overview of NOAA Fisheries' 2003 Findings Report.***

John Palensky said the 2003 findings report has been completed and is undergoing final review at NOAA Fisheries' office in Washington D.C. The findings report will be released to the public as soon as possible.

#### ***5. Update on Federal Caucus Activities.***

Jim Fodrea reported that, at its most recent meeting, the Federal Caucus discussed a couple of key items, the first of which was offsite mitigation. There is a draft NOAA findings document circulating among the federal agencies regarding the progress that is being made in this area, said Fodrea; it has key implications for the National Wildlife Federation v. NMFS lawsuit. Another major discussion topic at the meeting was subbasin planning, Fodrea said. Was there any discussion of how much progress has been made by the federal land managers toward the offsite mitigation goals in the BiOp? Ruff asked. Yes, Fodrea replied; the findings document has rated the federal agencies fairly low, at least with respect to the highest-priority actions.

#### ***6. Briefing on the Water Quality Plan.***

The Corps' Paul Ocker briefed the group on the current status of the Mainstem Water Quality Plan; he said a final draft of the plan is now available. The action agencies were directed to develop the plan by Appendix B of the 2000 BiOp, he explained; the plan is divided into two sections: total dissolved gas and temperature. He noted that the document was written by the Corps, but with the participation of many federal, state, tribal and private entities. Ocker distributed Enclosure C, an document that includes a full list of those entities that participated in the development of the plan. He noted that the action agencies anticipate that yearly updates to the Mainstem Water Quality Plan will be necessary. Ockert added that copies of the 145-page Water Quality Plan can be obtained from the following website:  
<http://www.nwww.usace.army.mil/reports/waterquality/wqp2003.pdf>.

At Ruff's request, Ocker provided examples of some of the actions evaluated and catalogued in the Water Quality Plan:

##### **Total Dissolved Gas**

- Little Goose gas fasttrack
- Little Goose general model tests
- Spill passage survival improvements at Little Goose
- Physical and biological studies for a Little Goose RSW

##### **Water Temperature**

- Draft Dworshak an additional 20 feet during September
- Operate Lower Granite Reservoir to spillway crest year-'round
- Remove some dams and reservoirs

- Investigate groundwater re-charge to help cool mainstem water temperatures
- Investigate cool-water releases from the Hells Canyon complex
- Penstock-selective withdrawal at Grand Coulee
- Investigate cool water releases from the Canadian projects
- Grand Coulee powerhouse operations
- Modification of Dworshak National Fish Hatchery water supply (complete)

#### Research

- Basinwide “DTEMP” study
- Study juvenile and adult migration using depth- and temperature-sensitive tags

Ocker noted that a complete dam-by-dam list of the actions called for in the plan are included in the appendices to the Water Quality Plan. In response to a question from Shurts, Ruff said the Water Quality Plan is a compilation of all of the water quality improvement actions the Water Quality Plan Work Group could identify for all of the Snake and Columbia River projects, including some that are not covered under the BiOps, the mainstem TMDLs and the Council Fish and Wildlife Plan. He added that the next step in this process is to identify the most feasible, highest-priority actions in this list. At the next WQPG meeting, each of the group participating has been asked to come in with their list of the 10 highest-priority actions for both gas and temperature, Ruff added.

At this point, he said, it is a resource document more than a plan; once this second phase is completed, however, it will inform the implementation strategies that will be a major part of the mainstem TMDLs. The Corps will also use this document in support of the variances it submits to the state water quality agencies in support of the BiOp spill program, Ruff added. Overall, it is intended as an implementation plan for the water quality improvement actions called for in Appendix B of the 2000 FCRPS BiOp, he explained.

Will some of the less-feasible items in the plan be deleted over time? Athearn asked. That’s not for me to say, Ocker replied; it will be up to the WQPG to decide that. My concern is that the more actions that have already been rejected as infeasible are included in the plan, the less-seriously people will take it, Athearn said. That may be true, Ocker replied, but the infeasibility of a given project often depends on who you ask. Also, some items that are not feasible at this time, such as dam breaching, may be put back on the table in future years. It was suggested that the items determined to be infeasible at this time be put into a separate appendix.

In response to a question, Ruff said the next WQPG meeting is scheduled for the afternoon of May 14 at NOAA Fisheries’ Portland office. He thanked Ocker for all his hard work in editing this document; the WQPG would not be where it is if not for Paul’s hard work and dedication, Ruff said.

#### ***7. Update on Mainstem and Systemwide Province Project Selection Process.***

CBFWA’s Tom Iverson reminded the group that the mainstem is the last province of the

Council's rolling provincial review process. Project prioritization is scheduled to be complete by June, at which time the FY'04 project budgets will be adopted. Projects will be prioritized for the FY'04-'06 period, he said. One key issue we're trying to resolve is which budget to balance to, Iverson said; he spent a few minutes explaining the nuances of the current funding situation. Iverson noted that the Council expects to have approximately \$31 million with which to fund all of the mainstem projects. He added that there are \$34 million in ongoing projects alone, so it isn't going to be easy to reach agreement on project priorities. The action agencies and NMFS have also identified \$41 million in Tier 1 and 2 BiOp-critical projects, Iverson said.

Iverson said all of the project sponsors met last Thursday; at that meeting, Council staff briefed the sponsors on the mainstem province funding situation. Again, he said, the goal is to have a list of project priorities that fits within the available budget in time for approval at the Council's June meeting in Boise.

Iverson added that the other major issue in the mainstem province is RM&E gaps; BPA has identified about 15 RM&E projects they feel need to get underway in FY'03, which is another factor adding pressure to the mainstem funding process. However, Iverson said, it has been determined that it will not be possible to implement more than one of those projects. At the May Council meeting, BPA is also expected to present a short list of projects they would like to have approved in June, so that they can move out on them this summer, Iverson added. Again, he said, it is not going to be easy to reach agreement on the list of FY'04 project priorities, but we're moving ahead. The bottom line is that, unless your project is identified as critical to BiOp implementation, you're in the red zone and extremely unlikely to be funded, Iverson said – there isn't even enough funding to do all of the BiOp-critical projects that have been identified.

#### ***8. Preview of Rocky Reach Tour.***

Chuck Pevin of Chelan PUD described the new surface bypass facility at Rocky Reach Dam, and gave a preview of tomorrow's tour of the fish passage facilities at that project.

#### ***9. Next IT Meeting Date.***

The next meeting of the Implementation Team was set for June 5. Meeting summary prepared by Jeff Kuechle, BPA contractor. NOTE: Athearn requested that I add a brief statement to the April 3 IT Notes regarding NMFS' agreement to provide criteria for the IT to use in future marginal water years as to when spill should begin at the Lower Snake projects.